

# CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A computer system for distributed collaborative computing, the system comprising:

5 a plurality of server computers connected to a plurality of client computers via a global-area computer network;

a high-speed direct connection link connecting the plurality of server computers; and

10 a computer program executable by the server computers, wherein the computer program comprises computer instructions for:

conducting an on-line conference among an arbitrary number of the client computers connected to an arbitrary number of the server computers over the global-area network and the high-speed direct connection link; and

15 sharing an application program executed on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

2. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

25 spawning one or more processes on the server computers controlling the execution of the shared application program;

monitoring the operational status of the spawned processes; and

30 spawning a new process in the event failure of a spawned process is detected.

3. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

5           viewing a document stored on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

4. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

          detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;  
          disconnecting the failed server computer from  
15       the on-line conference;  
          connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and  
          resuming the on-line conference.

20       5. The computer system of claim 1, further comprising a database, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:  
          storing information about the status of the on-line conference in the database.

25       6. The computer system of claim 1, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:  
          ensuring that a maximum number of authorized  
30       conference participants in not exceeded.

7. A method of operating a distributed collaborative computing system comprising a plurality of server computers, the method comprising:

5           conducting an on-line conference among  
an arbitrary number of the client computers  
connected to an arbitrary number of the  
server computers over the global-area network  
and the high-speed direct connection link;  
and

10           sharing an application program executed  
on one of the client computers on an  
arbitrary number of other client computers.

15       8. The method claim 7, further comprising:  
          spawning one or more processes on the server  
computers controlling the execution of the shared  
application program;

20           monitoring the operational status of the  
spawned processes; and  
          spawning a new process in the event failure  
of a spawned process is detected.

25       9. The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
          viewing a document stored on one of the  
client computers on an arbitrary number of other  
client computers.

30       10. The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
          detecting a failure of one of the server  
computers handling the on-line conference;

disconnecting the failed server computer from  
the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to  
the conference; and

5           resuming the on-line conference.

11. The method of claim 7, wherein the  
distributed collaborative computing system further  
comprises a database and the method further comprises:

10           storing information about the status of the  
on-line conference in the database.

12. The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
ensuring that a maximum number of authorized  
15           conference participants in not exceeded.

13. A computer-readable storage medium storing a  
computer program executable by a plurality of server  
computers, the computer program comprising computer  
20           instructions for:

conducting an on-line conference among  
an arbitrary number of the client computers  
connected to an arbitrary number of the  
server computers over the global-area network  
25           and the high-speed direct connection link;  
and

sharing an application program executed  
on one of the client computers on an  
arbitrary number of other client computers.

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14. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

5 spawning one or more processes on the server computers controlling the execution of the shared application program;

monitoring the operational status of the spawned processes; and

10 spawning a new process in the event failure of a spawned process is detected.

15 15. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

viewing a document stored on one of the client computers on an arbitrary number of other client computers.

20 16. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

detecting a failure of one of the server computers handling the on-line conference;

25 disconnecting the failed server computer from the on-line conference;

connecting another of the server computers to the conference; and

resuming the on-line conference.

30 17. The computer-readable storage medium of claim 13, further comprising a database, wherein the computer program further comprises computer instructions for:

storing information about the status of the  
on-line conference in the database.

18. The computer-readable storage medium of claim  
5 13, wherein the computer program further comprises  
computer instructions for:

ensuring that a maximum number of authorized  
conference participants in not exceeded.